



EACC NEWS

The East Asia Christian Conference is an organ of continuing fellowship and co-operation among the Churches and Christian Councils in East Asia.

Secretary for Information: Lee Soo Jin

February 15, 1973
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MEETING OF THE INDOCHINA FUND

HONG KONG - The Board of the Fund for Reconstruction and Reconciliation in Indochina, an agency of the World Council of Churches (WCC), met in Hong Kong on February 8 and 9, 1973. The members of the Board, coming from many parts of the world gave thanks for the ceasefire for the sake of the victims of the war and for the increased possibility of reconciliation and mutual service which it opens up to all concerned.

The Board appealed for funds to the amount of US\$5 million for the first stage of an expanding programme in all Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. In carrying out these programmes, the Board pledged itself to give absolute priority in decision-making and programme implementation to the Indochinese people and organizations. Within that context it will support primarily programmes involving some elements of the population likely to be outside the major centres of reconstruction. It also expects to adjust to approaches to the differing patterns of life in the four regions in the area.

In a paper presented by the Vietnamese to the Board, it was stated that "during the war, the Vietnamese people were drawn into a military adventure. With peace, they are afraid of being caught again in an adventurous mess of reconstruction and development imposed on them maybe not with dark designs, but through the good will of the "western centred universe". The paper further said, "to equip the future Vietnamese villages with modern facilities is not enough ... priority must be given to the building of a spirit of fraternity and reconciliation."

The Board agreed that in view of the urgency of involving a wider group of people in the conversation on the ecumenical policy of involvement in Indochina, a representative forum be planned in connection with the next meeting of the Board. The plan of the forum entails the simultaneous visitation of separate groups to each of the four regions in Indochina with the purpose of facilitating dialogue with a maximum number of Indochinese to be followed by a two day plenary meeting of all groups. In addition to the Indochinese, approximately 20 persons from Asia and 35 from the rest of the world be involved. The Forum is scheduled to be held in June 1973, following which the Board will meet again.

The Board expressed its conviction that the Churches will continue to support the present service and relief programmes of Asian Christian Service, Vietnam Christian Service and medical assistance to north Vietnam and estimates that this will require a minimum expenditure of US\$1½ million a year for a further three years.

THE MAN WITH THE HATED BOOK

KATHMANDU - The lamas call him 'the man with the hated book'; the other Tibetans trekking down into the Kathmandu valley in Nepal have affectionately named him 'the Jesus man'. Earnest and hard-headed, they accept a Tibetan Scripture or two, sometimes even three, but after much bargaining. One man, one of a team driving a mule-train headed north, gave his cherished sack-needle in exchange for a Gospel. Trained in chanting the eighty adorations at crack of dawn, the Tibetans read and re-read the Scriptures they buy. They buy in spite of the lamas' ban, but in fear and trembling, for the lamas have threatened them with severe punishment. A solitary lama, too, bought a Gospel months ago. On a second visit he said: 'I can see Jesus is coming again,' and bought another.

Four hundred books in nine months - not an impressive figure statistically speaking - yet everyone of them read and re-read scores of times by scores of people by the light of the flickering lamps which burn behind the mists masking the mountains and moving across the valleys.

'The Jesus man' has sold 3,200 books in a year, many of them to students not untouched by Marxian dialectics.

Twenty years ago, thirteen Nepalis returned to Pokhara having become followers of Christ during their sojourn in India. This marked the beginning of Christianity in Nepal, a Christianity which needs to contend with the law against change of religion. Imprisonments have not been uncommon, nine men are facing trial today, one of them still in prison though he had served his term some years ago. But 'the Word of God is not bound'.

THE MEKONG PROJECT OF THE UNITED NATIONS

SAIGON - The Mekong Project seeks the comprehensive development of the water resources and related resources of the Lower Mekong Basin, for the benefit of all the people of the basin without distinction as to nationality, religion or politics. It involves economic, social and engineering studies, agricultural development, navigational improvement and ecological projects. The sums provided since 1957 by the four riparian countries and 25 other nations amount to US\$90 million and US\$100 million respectively. From 1972 - 2000 A.D., a total of \$12 billion is intended to be invested to harness this international river and develop its tributaries. This project when completed would change the economic, social and ecological complexion of the whole region.

The four-nation (Khmer Republic, Laos, Republic of Vietnam and Thailand) Mekong Committee held its 60th (Plenary) Session from 17 - 23 January, in Saigon. In a message to the Committee, U NYUN, the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East (ECAFE) under whose auspices the Committee operates, said, "It is my earnest belief that the Mekong Project, which has already achieved so much against a troubled background, will serve in the years to come not only to advance the quality of life of the people of the lower Mekong basin to an immeasurable degree, but also to inspire those engaged in water resources development projects, large and small, elsewhere in Asia and the world". Warning of the magnitude of the problems involved in the project, U NYUN continued: "Improvement of living standards means nothing less than improving the whole quality of the people's life. The wrong kind of

WSCF ELECTS ASIAN AS GENERAL SECRETARY

GENEVA - The 26th General Assembly of the World Student Christian Federation (WSCF), composed of delegates from Student Christian Movements in 60 countries, chose "Liberation" as the theme for the next four years. The Assembly convened in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from 29th December to 8th January, 1973.

The assembly suggested that the WSCF initiate a study programme on Liberation to assist SCMs to identify the interrelationships between various forms of oppression; identify the dynamics of liberation and oppression within the Federation with special emphasis on human development; encourage the development of liberation movements and spread information about these movements. A major portion of the meeting was devoted to reports from the six regions of the WSCF. Then working groups on "Christian Identity," "Education" and "The Liberation Struggle" set guidelines for the next quadrennium.

Mrs. MERCY ODUYOYE, a Ghanaian Methodist who serves as Youth Secretary for the All Africa Conference of Churches, was elected Chairwoman of the Federation, and the Rev. FELICIANO CARINO, a Filipino, formerly Secretary for Student World Relations of the United Presbyterian Church (USA), was named General Secretary.

Summing up the General Assembly, Mr. CARINO pointed to several "hopeful" developments. First was the new structure brought about by amending the constitution to bring it into line with the regionalization process that has taken place since the last assembly. Secondly, he mentioned "more openness to talk across our regional boundaries and to deal with common problems emerging from vigorous activities that have occurred in our respective regions". At Addis, he said, "we began to talk once more about our theological task as a Federation - about the possibility of connecting our various forms of theological reflection with the political struggles we want to be part of ... to build more just and humane societies".

BRIEFS:

- ... The printing license of Sinar Harapan, an Indonesian newspaper identified with the Protestant community, was revoked for ten days early in January. The action was taken by government security officials after the newspaper published national budget figures for the 1973 - 74 fiscal year prior to their official release. The revocation was imposed January 2 and was lifted January 12. Sinar Harapan, which in English means "Ray of Hope", is an afternoon daily serving Jakarta and other regional capitals in Indonesia. It has a circulation estimated at more than 50,000.
- ... The Far Eastern Economic Review discussed Japan's regional role and came to the conclusion: "The nation is now going through the agonizing business of deciding just what to say to the region of which it is a part geographically and, increasingly, economically. It is in the process of fleshing out a regional identity around the hard skeleton of an economic animal."
- ... Miss ACHARA HEMMANIE, a teacher at Wattana Wittaya Academy in Bangkok, left yesterday for a year's study in Christian Education at Rolland House, Presbyterian Deaconess Training College in Melbourne. Miss ACHARA's year of study is made available through the EACC free place Scholarships Programme.

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development or development without safeguards could prove worse for many of the inhabitants of the basin than no development at all. We must guard against the possible increases in pollution and spread of disease that may easily result from economic development, and be ready to mitigate or ward off the social problems often produced by resettlement and by other radical changes in a rural people's way of life. Indeed, great social problems can actually arise from new and greater opportunities in life. All these things must be weighed in the balance."

Mr. VAN DER OORD, the Committee's Executive Agent, said that US\$230 million have already been committed to the Project. "Clearly the situation calls for faith and vision", he said. The annual meeting of the four-nation Committee was also attended by representatives of some 15 nations co-operating in its work for the over-all development of water and other resources of the Lower Mekong Basin.

CHURCHES AID NICARAGUA

SYDNEY - The Division of World Christian Action of the Australian Council of Churches (ACC) has sent A\$3,000 from its emergency relief fund towards the A\$500,000 churches' relief programme in Managua, Nicaragua. The Churches are working closely with the Government of Nicaragua, UNDRO (United Nations Disaster Relief Organization) and the International Red Cross. The churches' role in assisting the rehabilitation of people made homeless in the earthquake of November last year will continue for 6 months.

BILINGUAL INFORMATION SERVICES, INDONESIAN COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

JAKARTA - "Berita DGI", a monthly newsletter issued by the Council of Churches in Indonesia for more than 20 years, has been succeeded by a new periodical called Berita Oikoumene. Published in the Indonesian language and with a circulation of 750 copies, the new monthly has a counterpart in the English language titled Ecumenical News (circulation of 100 copies). Both feature identical new stories on the life and work of the Christian Church, nationally and internationally. The two appeared for the first time in January.

Tentatively scheduled to appear every two months as parts of Berita Oikoumene and Ecumenical News are additions titled Lampiran and Supplement, respectively. The two will carry identical feature stories and special articles of particular interest to the Christian community.

The news carried by the Indonesian and English language publications will be gathered and prepared by a newly-established Information Bureau in the Council of Churches. Attached to the General Secretariat of the council, the bureau is staffed by Mr. INDERA NABABAN and Mr. DONALD F. CARLSON. Mr. NABABAN is a layman of the Batak Protestant Christian Church who has edited Berita DGI for nearly two years, first on a part time basis and, since last January, on a full time basis. Mr. CARLSON is a lay missionary of the Lutheran Church in America who has been commissioned to assist the council in the field of communication and mass media. Before assuming his present tasks, he served as assistant director of the Bureau of Information of the Lutheran Council in the USA, a cooperative agency headquartered in New York.



ASIAN CHRISTIAN SERVICE

Vietnam
Laos
Cambodia

Newsletter

Director: Samuel M. Isaac
Information: Lee Soo Jin

sign of christian presence

February 15, 1973

PROPOSED POST
CEASEFIRE
ACTIONS AND
PRIORITIES
- ASIAN
CHRISTIAN
SERVICE,
VIETNAM*

1. Help to refugees and displaced persons as they return to their villages, and to their traditional forms of life. This would also include medical and social relief assistance as found necessary.
2. Help in the resettlement of people, in the reconstruction of their economy and in the regaining of their social and communal values, which would include community development assistance.
3. Social welfare assistance, and help to people, especially women and youth, who are directly or indirectly affected by the war, to have opportunities to return to normal life and to be integrated into the society.
4. Social Justice assistance: and help to such groups as released "political detainees" in their rehabilitation and integration in the society.

*NOTE: This proposal does not substitute or alter the ACS Programme Plan for 1973; but is seen as increased activity in the above areas of concern. The ACS Programme Plan for 1973 may however be altered, modified or revised as conditions obtaining in Vietnam in the immediate future would necessitate.

A LETTER
FROM
ACS
DIRECTOR

Dear Friend:

The above proposals give an indication of our proposed post ceasefire priorities in Vietnam. This will soon be considered by the Programme Advisory Committee in Vietnam, and will also be taken up with the EACC Committee of Reference for ACS shortly, with additional details now under preparation.

These proposed actions are apart from the normal programme we have set ourselves to do in 1973. Yet at this stage it is too early to judge as to what extent our normal programme itself may have to undergo modifications and changes in the months to come.

The ceasefire in Vietnam has not brought peace or tranquility in the past few days: and it is now predicted that the political struggle will intensify. Would this mean an increase in the need for refugee relief assistance and medical help at a time when we are most eager to increase our help in rehabilitation, reconstruction and development? We do not know: and yet we keep ourselves open and flexible, to respond as the needs of the hour would dictate in terms of relief assistance as well.

We are also keeping a close watch in Laos to determine our response to the developing situation here in the next few weeks when a ceasefire is expected. The need for more relief and medical assistance to large numbers of indigent refugees here is obvious. This may also be the case in Cambodia if the unilateral ceasefire which Phnom Penh is stated to have established is respected by all concerned.

In Vietnam, in the areas which we have so far served, we believe we have the capability to expand our programmes three fold in the categories of work in which we have experience and relationship in the community infrastructure. This will be in leadership and vocational training, scholarships, health, community development, rural cooperatives, agriculture, and social welfare work. In this process of multiplying our activity in these fields we believe some of our major assets would be the people with whom we have so far participated in such projects, and who would from their own background and experience be able to assist other groups and communities to achieve similar benefits.

We also believe that the contacts we have with communities, youth and student groups both religious and secular would make it possible for us to rely upon them for implementation of immediate relief programmes as the situation may require.

We are also exploring needs, and methods of assistance, in other areas of Vietnam.

We go through these days with much hope and prayer that the ceasefire may be real and that the guns may truly turn silent. We also wait upon God's guidance in these days of change so that our ears may hear, our eyes may see and our hands may be prepared to do what is most needed in restoring dignity, hope and opportunity to people long oppressed by war.

Please continue to pray for PEACE which is not yet at hand.

Sincerely yours,

(Signed)

Samuel M. ISAAC
Director

January 30, 1973

P.S.: Financial requirements to meet our increased post ceasefire activity will be coordinated within the WCC/CICARWS appeal for Indochina.

ACS ASSISTS
IN
REHABILITATION
IN LAOS

ACS extended rehabilitation assistance to victims of military actions in November and December in Savannakhet, Khammouane and Wapikhamthong Provinces beginning with the reconstruction and repair of 9 completely destroyed houses, 15 partially damaged dwellings and 2 granaries in Songkhone, Savannakhet. Assistance in the form of roofing and flooring materials were distributed. Those who received assistance took care of the cost of either reconstruction or repair, which was 2/3 of the total cost.

Nine families who failed to save anything received cooking utensils too. These families, most of whom are Christians, existed by borrowing cooking utensils from neighbors, the nearest of whom lived several hundred meters away, or shared food among themselves for the past weeks.

Programme Officer FRANS A. TUMIWA and Liaison Assistant BOUNMY SENGDARA made a follow-up survey of the refugee situation in Savannakhet. They accompanied Dr. F.C. MADDOX, team leader of the Rural Medical Programme in Savannakhet to visit Songkhone, the first village which served as the objective for rehabilitation.

They paid a visit to Tha Seno refugee villages to see the milk and multivitamin distribution to refugees. Miss ANNA CAPPON of the Overseas Missionary Fellowship has been given supplies to assist her in the programme of milk and multivitamin distribution. 6,000 new refugees received assistance through this project. Blankets, mosquito nets valued at 480,000 (US\$ 13,332) were distributed by ACS to the refugees. In connection with refugee assistance, the Ministry of Social Welfare also suggested to ACS to assist refugees in Pakse, where no assistance by any international voluntary organization has yet been extended.

SCHOLARSHIP
COMMITTEE
MEETING
- SAIGON

The Scholarship Committee met on 5th January to decide on applications for scholarship grants from various social organizations. Only 4 scholarships were granted to 2 organizations, namely The Educational Social Christian Organization in Pleiku, the Cau Son Social Center, near Saigon, and to 1 special case.

The Educational Social Christian Organization will receive as of February 1973 two scholarships for Misses NGUYEN THI YEN and NGUYEN THI TAM to study nursing. The CAU SON Social Center will also receive a scholarship for the training of 1 instructor, in typing, Sister NINH THI MO. The special case is a refugee boy from Quang Tri, NGUYEN TRI QUOC, who wants to study radio and TV maintenance, so that he will be able to support his widowed mother. His training will be directly under the supervision of Mr. HOANG HUU LY, ACS Project Officer's assistant.

The total amount of money granted by the Scholarship Committee on 5th January was 153,700 VN\$ (equivalent to US\$334) during the year 1973.

WAT TAY GROUPE
SCOLAIRE
COMMITTEE
FORMED
- LAOS

In a joint Wat Tay Groupe Scolaire PTA-ACS meeting recently, a construction committee was organized for the implementation of the construction of a concrete, 8 room, two storey school building worth US\$19,030. Asian Christian Service is contributing the amount of US\$2,092 which comes from the United Methodist Committee for Overseas Relief (UMCOR). The PTA provides the balance of USA3,092 and any further expense over and above the project budget.

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EACC NEWS
ACS NEWSLETTER
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